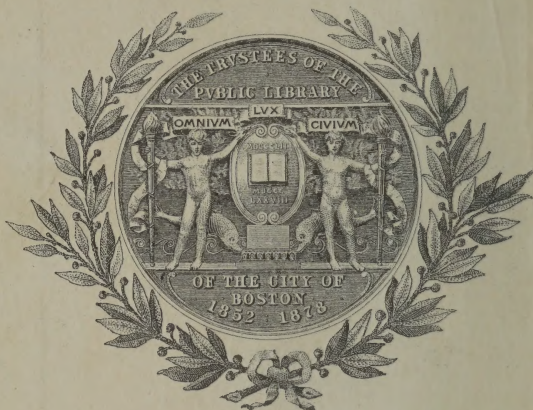




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GIVEN BY

Willard S. Allen.

LETTER

TO

REV. DR. STEVENS,

ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS

LATE APPEAL

TO THE

4265.388

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

BY

D. D. WHEDON, D. D.


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 NOTE.—The writer wishes it to be understood that although he might possibly be inclined, at the suggestion of friends, to modify or alter some passages, he has concluded on the whole to give the Letter to the world precisely as originally written. No party or person is committed by any passage except the author himself.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE N. Y. TRIBUNE.

Sir,—

The reason of my bringing into the columns of a secular paper a passage of controversy somewhat denominational, is briefly this: The discussion of the adoption of a new constitutional rule by the Methodist Episcopal Church at its Quadrennial General Conference, to be held at Buffalo next May, is now before the mind of our denominational public, and occupying the columns of our religious press. Dr. Stevens, the editor of our *New York Christian Advocate*, has, for some weeks past, been publishing, and is still continuing, a series of editorials (part of which he has embodied in a pamphlet), against the Anti-Slavery side of the question. Our two New York Annual Conferences have voted in favor of such a rule. An article, containing views somewhat diverse from his own, was offered by me to Dr. Stevens, but declined without examination, on grounds precluding the admission of any statement from the opposite side. The audience of *The Advocate and Journal*, including the two Conferences named, is compelled to hear what Dr. Stevens is pleased to say without the privilege of an answer. The Anti-Slavery side is obliged to feel itself misrepresented and misconstrued, without the rightful means of stating its own case. From a régime so consonant with the spirit of oppression, I appeal to your columns, registering my thanks to Almighty God that we have within our midst so free and fearless an advocate of the cause of human right.

Willard S. Allen.

August 3, 1903

HARMLESSNESS OF A NEW RULE EXCLUDING SLAVERY FROM THE CHURCH.

DR. STEVENS:—In regard to the adoption of a new rule in our Discipline, making slaveholding a constitutional disqualification for membership, I offer the following remarks:

Our Church now, so far as things are developed, seems to be divided into three sections,—a *conservative middle*, with *two dubious extremes*.

The *middle* comprehends those who stand upon the platform of a constitutional change of the General Rule, so as to record the true position of the Church in regard to Slavery. They prefer the slow but securely constitutional process of the two-thirds rule, because they believe that indoctrination should precede legislation. They wish, through the periodical and other organs of our Church, so to convert the main body, that legislation may be laid upon a moral basis in the minds of the prepared people. Even though we, many of us, believe a change of the statutory chapter, by a bare majority, to be constitutional, we believe that a course of indoctrination, and slow, firm legislation, is morally wiser, and to that end we are pressing with a steady and cool aim.

The *extremists* on one side, are those who sustain the extirpatory clause in the statutory chapter to be passed by a mere majority. They seem to think that arbitrary

legislation, on ever so small a capital, will purify the Church from Slavery. When told that litigation would ensue, and a general break-up of our material establishments, with disorder and disaster generally, they seem to express a willingness to undergo or submit to these results. Those who sympathize more or less fully with these views are very numerous through the Church. And what is worse, they threaten a large secession during the coming four years, unless at least a clear, strong gain is made for the cause of righteousness at the next General Conference.

The other, and by far the more violent *extreme*, comprehends those who oppose all change, and threaten the most desperate measures if any change, or any change not merely verbal, is made. Their usual language has been, "The Discipline as it is; not an *i* shall be dotted or a *t* be crossed." This Medic law they generally enforce with threats that they will secede in a body; they will split the Church through the centre, they will bring us before the Supreme Court, they will take the property of the Church, and wreck our whole system. It is, indeed, not right to bring the whole class under responsibility for all these extreme sayings. Yet, when in our own city we find it boldly threatened, from a high source, that a few rich men will bring our embarrassed Church property to the auction block, if their own views are not obeyed, it must be admitted, if threats are made with the slightest purpose of execution, the spirit corporate of this class is of the most malignantly destructive type. Nothing from the other extreme, so far as I know, approaches the utter unscrupulousness apparent in the occasional manifestoes, or the organic operations, of these rash and thoughtless brethren.

Between the ultraisms of these two extremes, there is this marked difference: the former manifest a bold willingness to suffer, and the latter to inflict. The former is ready to undergo the loss of all things, if needs be; the other is prepared to destroy all things, if it cannot have its way. The former is ready to sacrifice itself for a principle; the latter seems ready to sacrifice every thing to itself. The former is the enthusiasm that will endure the flame; the latter resembles somewhat the fanaticism that could apply the torch. The former of the two, I think, is unrequired at the present time; and the latter the Church should firmly and steadily ignore. The Quarterly, with all our other periodicals, except perhaps the one under your care, has chastened both extremes. We have maintained loyalty to the Church. We have opposed secession from either side. Firmly through this narrow channel, between opposite whirlpools, would we safely navigate the noble ship. Our annual Conferences, by annual vigorous resolutions against Slavery, have taken the same course. If the constitutional two-thirds vote can be attained at our next General Conference, the struggle is over, and peace returns. If we fail, the end is not yet. We shall man our posts with true, loyal, conservative Anti-Slavery men, and we shall succeed at a coming day, when the moral preparation is made, and the normal, healthful process can be conservatively completed.

Upon this middle platform, until within a few weeks past, I fondly hoped you stood, and had said in my heart that you would come out right. You voted at the last General Conference for the Wisconsin Rule, making the "holding a human being as property" a disqualification for membership. But a few months

since, you declared that the editors espousing the General-Rule platform had come to your grounds. I then said you were right. But, alas, within a few past weeks, under I know not what influence, you have joined the most violent of the two extremes; and we, with whom you voted four years ago, and upon whose ground you stood four months ago, find ourselves now assailed by you as destructive extremists.

But having joined *the extremists*, with all the zeal of a new recruit, you are their hearty ally, and their loudest organ. No Union-saver was ever so panical in describing the ruin to ensue, if the Church does not prostrate herself at the feet of the small ultra Pro-Slavery faction existing in some of our Border Conferences. The change of our General Rule is, forsooth, a terrible deed, which may be perpetrated "in less than a twelvemonth"—a deed which may involve its authors in a "lifelong remorse." It will result in "division;" nay, in "division" which "will not be local," but will "strike through our whole central mass." The factionists in the Border (in distinction from our Border Anti-Slavery men) are thus encouraged to insurrection. They are cheered up with the false assurance that bold pretension and fierce bravado will have ample support all through the Church, and that they have only to push disunion to its utmost to attain full success in the work of ruin in order to rule. And you, forsooth, Dr. Stevens, call this "prudence!" It is sedition. If the Church is divided by the "aid and comfort" thus afforded to factionists from the headquarters, or, if the Church is frightened from her propriety into shameful cowardice, and men shall ask what caused this ruin, or this shame, the answer will be, "The course of *The Advocate and Journal* for

six months preceeding the General Conference." If the Church should, by strange infatuation, be divided, and it should be asked who split the Methodist Church in two, the answer will be, "Bishop Andrew the first time, and Abel Stevens the second time." We have, remember, not only a southern Border, but a great northeast and a great northwest, and a firm centre. What, in all these sections, the feeling is, our Church papers, even while I am writing, have arrived to tell. Says our *Herald* at Boston :

"New England is as cool on this subject as her own sea-breezes, as determined as her own granite mountains. She will vote, solid, against Slavery, because she thinks God demands it—but she will do it as lovingly as God enforces his laws."

Our *North-Western Advocate* responds :

"But northward, so sore has become the public conscience, that unless there shall be advanced action—unless that advanced action shall be unmistakable—the consequences will be deplorable. It is no idle word, when we say that the unity of the Church may depend upon some decided concession to Northern sentiment. Brethren on the Border will hear much, from casual observers, of a reaction, but let them not be deceived. We are loyal ; our people and our Conferences will rebuke insubordination, but they are devoted to principle. There is not a step backward in a single Conference, nor among our people. Look at this, brethren. As ye desire the unity of the Church, look to it."

While such is the feeling of the Northeast and Northwest, you have frequently yourself proclaimed that the Centre is on the point of secession. And yet what is your course ? You rally up the Border to a desperate and reckless opposition. If, then, the meeting of the Border with the great body of the Church prove a concussion and a "division," to whom will belong the "life-long remorse?" To yourself, Dr. Stevens.

Standing on its middle platform, *The Quarterly Re-*

view, as you will admit, has firmly maintained a conservative, progressive character, administering impartial rebuke to secessionism on either hand. Believing that the "objects desired could be best attained through the established institutions of the Church," it has in its editorial department firmly endeavored to maintain those institutions—our Episcopacy, our Itinerancy, and our Conference system—intact, and in full possession of all their legitimate powers. It has fearlessly affirmed the right and the duty of free, bold utterance on the subject of Slavery in its own pages, and in all the periodicals of the Church; but has excluded from its own area all propositions for a change of Discipline. Every syllable *The Quarterly* has uttered has been within the limitation of "the Discipline as it is;" under the assumption that much might be done to bring the mind of the Church to the standard of the Discipline, and that bringing the Church to the Discipline was the best preparatory for bringing the Discipline to the standard of God's law. If this preparatory work be done, then the Discipline can, at the proper time, healthfully and safely be changed. If the Discipline cannot be safely changed, then the preparatory work is not yet done. The test of this point is the power to change our General Rule by the two-thirds vote; and in either case the result will show the right. While you, therefore, are shivering with a panic,—or as an alarmist, are creating a panic you affect,—I am looking forward calmly to the result as a simple test of the moral strength of the Church to take her proper stand on the great question which God has placed before her. I trust she has that moral strength; otherwise this weary, weary war, which estranges the hearts of brethren, and absorbs her energies from other great

enterprises of good, will still hang heavy on her soul. But I can scarce express my reprehension, my brother, at your extravagant efforts to affect the calmness of the Church with panic, to disturb her clear, conscientious, rational deliberations with threats of division and clamor of ruin, strengthening thereby the hands of the disloyal in extorting a wrong decision from the frightened heart of the Church. In all your alarming paragraphs I cannot recollect a single rebuke which you administer to the secessionists on your side, who, you say, will convulse the Church. Their menaces, to all appearance, you hold as right, and cultivate them as so much capital wherewith to subdue the Church into subjection under their pressure. You seek the unity of the Church; but that unity is to be under the rod of our little Church slave-power. I, on the other hand, rebuke both secessionisms alike; believing that neither side has any reason, in either event, to leave the communion of the Church, and that it is the duty of the Church to take that medium course which, while it will satisfy the fair demands of the friends of freedom, will afford no just dissatisfaction to the loyal and earnest Anti-Slavery men of our border.

Painful, indeed, is the obloquy which middle men like myself are called to undergo from either extreme, and especially from your extreme—by far the most severe and bitterly proscriptive of the two. The laity of New York City in our Church are taught by those who are themselves threatening divisions, to believe us disloyal men; and “abolitionists,” “fanatics,” “extreme men,” are the epithets with which the bigoted are induced to withhold from us the courtesies of even social life. I have been a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church from my childhood—have been her

son and minister some more years than you—have served her with the best strength of my life, and grown infirm in her service—I have sympathized in her calamities, and rejoiced in her prosperities—I have wished to preserve her present organism in its strength, being less willing for any structural change than yourself. It seems to me, then, very hard, at this time of life, without ever having uttered the first disloyal syllable, to be held, even inclusively with others, and by those who are threatening disunion column by column, as a disorganizer and a disunionist, a destroyer of the Church of my birth, and of my choice. It seems hard to be thus held up in that character in our chief paper, by our chief editor, to the ministry and laity of this metropolis, and a large part of my Church. And when I look round and see the grave and weighty men who have committed themselves, and in a measure committed me to this change—our Dempsters, our Thomsons, our Hibbards, our Kingsleys, and our Eddys—and when I see whole Conferences solemnly committing themselves to it in solid column, I wonder that so many wise men can be so infatuated, and you, dear brother, be left almost alone to call them to reason.

What is this mighty change? It is the so altering a line or two in our book of Discipline as to make non-slaveholding a requisite for constitutional membership. That is all. The number of slaveholders in our Church, we are told, is some five thousand, mostly confined to two Conferences; by the time of the next census will be much fewer, and by the census next after nearly none at all. The change does not of itself excise any section, or any Conference, or any body. Slaveholders are still members of the Church, and whether they be

slaveholders within its intent, or, whether if they are they shall be tried, or condemned if tried, depends upon their own immediate part of the Church. My impression is that not a single man in the whole section in question will ever find his membership in the Church actually dissevered by it against his will. Simply, the cover of constitutionality is withdrawn from slaveholding membership. A few bitter slaveholders will doubtless leave in disgust, but the numerical loss will be our moral gain.

For, what will the Conferences containing the slaveholders do, on the change of rule? According to an extract given by you from their sectional paper, they will take one of three ways. They will join the Church South; or, they will form an independent Church; or, they will practically disregard the rule. Now which will they do?

I dismiss the first from consideration. A few, with a good riddance to them, will perhaps go South. But no one imagines that with the present amount of Anti-Slaveryism there existing, and the rising tide of Anti-Slaveryism looming up in the future, the Border Conferences will join the Church South.

I dismiss also the second. The attachment of large masses will still remain to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the certainty of disintegration, as the principles of freedom advance, would render the course unsafe. This would doubtless be the best course for the interest of us, the general Church. The diminution of our organic amount would be small; and being then a pure, united Anti-Slavery Church in principle and fact, the increase of our moral power would be immense. But it would be destructive to them. The danger that our Church, then purely Anti-Slavery,

would soon crowd upon the ground and annihilate their organism, is too palpable to be disregarded. Ten years' time would bring them back again in broken fragments, to our Methodist Episcopal Church.

The third is alone possible, and will be adopted. The change of the Rule will be but a paper change. It will have only a declaratory force—announcing the Anti-Slavery principle of the Church. And this is all the value—and a great value I shall show it to be—in the change, to render it desirable. It is the strongest possible form in which we can express the proposition that the Methodist Episcopal Church maintains that to hold a slave with a slaveholding intention is a sin. That silent nullification will be the course adopted we were long ago informed by the elder Dr. Bond, who advised this course in *The Advocate* to the Border, without a dissenting voice from it. The same policy was announced in an editorial of *The Advocate* just before the last General Conference, written, I suppose, by the younger Dr. Bond. All the reasons for this, the mildest and safest course, exist more strongly now, and will exist, in increasing power, unless your course, Dr. Stevens, arouses a fiercer and bolder purpose. All threats of any thing more than this may be safely set down as so much capital furnished to your manufactory of panic. This reduces the changed General Rule to an abstract proposition. A proposition which announces the proud doctrinal position of the Church, and is prophetic of what you, as well as I, hope is the real position to which she will rise not many years hence. Then, if asked, "What does your Church think of slaveholding?" our reply is, "She holds it to be sin." "Is she, then, a slaveholding Church?" "No, although there are slaveholders un-

constitutionally in the Church without her power to expel them."

That there could be no expulsion of even a single man for slaveholding from this change of rule is perfectly clear. With unwilling Bishops in the Border section, unwilling Presiding Elders, unwilling Conferences, unwilling Pastors, and unwilling Churches, what power has the General Conference to reach the individual? The prohibitory rule could possess only a moral force; but that moral force is of infinite importance.

And why is it so important to pass this change of rule? Because it is the duty of the Church before God to explain sin to men, and to oppose it with all her moral power in the earth. And slaveholding, wilful, self-interested slaveholding is sin. If to steal is sin, to steal a man is the highest sin. If to steal a man is a momentary act of sin, wilfully and selfishly to hold him stolen, is a permanent state of sin. It is a sin just as polygamy is sin; just as intemperance is sin. If the Church cannot expel the sinner, it is her duty to declare the sin, and to clear her own character, as speedily as possible, by renouncing and denouncing the sin in her most solemn and fundamental forms before heaven and earth. And therefore we say it is the most solemn duty of the Methodist Episcopal Church, hourly pressing upon her, to pass this change of rule, or perform some other solemn act equivalent, by which she shall testify her principle and vindicate her character as a Holy Church of Christ. Every hour of neglect of the Church to perform this duty is an hour of sin. And we say it is the duty of every member of this Church to perform his part in this act of self-purification from this dark stain of sin. He who refuses

or neglects to perform this once-explained duty, stands guilty and condemned before the bar of his adjudging God. It is an awful doctrine to proclaim, and an awful responsibility rests upon him, my dear brother, who proclaims from one of the watch-towers of Zion that it is her duty to share a little in the sin to convert the sinner! Awful morality to teach that the Church must practice a little polygamy in order to convert the polygamists, or indulge a little drunkenness to convert the intemperate, or to hold a few slaves to convert the slaveholders. Not such are the precepts or examples of the pure Jesus. If the Church would convert the souls of men, she must stand apart from the sins of men. The more she compromises with sin, the more do sinners multiply; skepticism increases, infidelity laughs at her disgrace, the name of Christ is blasphemed, and the souls of men are destroyed. Such is the awful picture of the results of the complicity of the American Church with the sin of Slavery, from which this change of rule seeks, as far as in us lies, to deliver the Church of our choice.

And now, what mighty convulsion need result from this simple change? Every thing will move on organically, just as it has before. You say that division "will strike through our whole central mass." Will it so? Let us see.

By striking "through the central mass," you cannot, of course, mean that all our individual churches will be divided through the centre. You must mean that our whole Church extent will be divided geographically, by a central line. This "mighty crack" will cut, perhaps, North and South, through Ohio, from Cincinnati to the Erie? But no, for both sides of this line are equally loyal to the Church, and equally zeal-

ous for the change of rule. Or it may be a line East and West. But such a line could not even take off the Western Border Churches. For there stands our *Central Christian Advocate*, with its Anti-Slavery constituency, continually increasing with a flood-tide of Free-soil immigration, and with its stronger Anti-Slavery columns, as you admit, than any other periodical of the Church.

Who, then, are going to secede? Is it the strip of Northern Churches along the Atlantic? Let us see. Will Philadelphia secede? Will Drs. Durbin, Hodgson, Castle, lead off a secession? No one believes it. These are loyal men and sound. They are neither revolutionists nor disorganizers. And I will answer, too, for the Jersey Conferences. Dr. John S. Porter, D. D. Lore, and Dr. Wiley, and all their hosts, are good men and true.

Let us come, then, to New York. Do you mean to secede, Dr. Stevens? Do your friends (that is, those who think with you) mean to secede? Surely, no. You are conservatives. You launch your thunders against secessionists—especially the possible secessionists of Western New York. But is city secession any better than rural secession? Besides, if you secede, who but yourselves is responsible? Your picture of ruin is not so much a description of what will be, as a threatening of what you will do. You foretell, and you will fulfil. Why are Anti-Slavery men to be denounced as revolutionists, because you revolutionize? There will be only just so much evil as you are pleased to commit. But you have no intention to secede or revolutionize. And have any of the eminent ministers in New York any revolutionary intentions? Will the venerable Dr. Bangs, the eloquent Dr. McClintock,

the courteous Dr. Kennedy, secede? None of them. These men are true to our common Methodism. Their counsels will be counsels of peace. And how about our churches? Will St. Paul's secede?—will Allen-street?—will John-street? Not one of them. But, if I am mistaken, I would like to be informed. If there be revolutionists among us, we would like to know who they are. The seceding minister, the seceding Church, ought, in honor, to announce their position before the time. Let the destructives show their hand. And what, then, Dr. Stevens, would appear? That, as between your section and mine, all the secession, all the disloyalty, all the danger, and all the destruction, must come from your own side of the house. You, with your clients, hold the reins of the whole destructive movement, and are absolutely responsible if harm ensue.

And because you hold the reins, all is safe. You realize too much the union, the honor, the future prosperity of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to permit you—for a mere propositional change, merely doctrinal in its character, without organic or executive force—to urge you or your friends into secession or revolution. You will not incur “the life-long remorse” of dividing the Church. You will not persist in saying to the Church and General Conference, “If you do not do as we say, we will raise a convulsion that will not be merely local,” but “divide the centre.” “We will break up the General Conference; we will break down the Episcopacy; we will close the honorable history of the Church.”

The glowing descriptions, then, of the ruin that will ensue upon the change of rule, are a fancy sketch, an ideality, a picture without an original, a threat without

a purpose of execution—for the plain reason that the change itself is not half so efficient, organically and executively, as either opponents or supporters suppose. It will not actually “turn the slaveholders out of the Church.” The superiority of this over any other form and method proposed, consists in the greater solemnity of its fundamental and constitutional character, and in the fact that it is a finality which will terminate the controversy. Let us dwell a moment on this point.

You propose a Pastoral Address or a Note. But these modes are too little solemn, fundamental, and permanent. A true statesmanship requires you at this time to adopt the measure which will be ultimate and complete, and put a close forever to this controversy in the Church. Yet, if the General Rule cannot pass, a Pastoral Address, explicit and clear, might do much to satisfy the strong Anti-slavery feeling of the Church, and save secession, especially if it promise hope for the future. A Pastoral Address, expressing the full doctrine that all slaveholding with self-interested and wilful intent is sin, and should cease from the Church; which should cordially commend our periodicals and our ministers firmly and prudently to promulgate that doctrine; and which should reprehend all invitation or admission of ministers of indiscriminately slaveholding churches to our pulpits, would, perhaps, be the best substitute for a new Rule, in case the latter fail of a two-thirds vote.

Shall we have merely an explanatory Note? Not, certainly, the one you propose, for that I conceive amounts to nothing. Its brief purport is this—the slavery which is contrary to the golden rule is sin. I suppose that everybody agrees that every thing which is contrary to the golden rule is sin, Slavery, of course,

included. You promise that there could be a unanimous vote for this, and seem to think it captious that anybody should contend for more. I think the Church South, and "all the rest of mankind," could vote for it, if occasion required. But I should vote against occupying the Discipline with such a truism. Moreover, it encourages the fallacy that there are two sorts of slaveholding among us—the guilty and the innocent. I doubt the existence of a single case of innocent, intentional, and permanent slaveholding within our Church, whatever there may be in other sections.

A third method—that of excluding slaveholders from the Church by a mere majority vote, changing our chapter, the platform of the extreme opposite to your own—I have ever promptly rejected. An argument showing its constitutionality can indeed be made. But our every step here should be carefully guarded, and placed above all constitutional debate. Never would I afford Slavery the second opportunity to bring us before our National Supreme Court—a tribunal where a very slight pretence against us will deprive us of all justice. It was a disaster to our cause when the proposition of a prohibitory chapter was broached. It is this, not the advocacy of a change of rule, which has given to some of the Anti-slaveryism of Western New York its reckless aspect. But their worst recklessness, so far as measure is concerned, is simply this—that they have proposed to surrender the Church temporalities over to the extremists of your section. This has led them, in language, to undervalue, and even attack, our material establishments in unguarded terms. Yet the worst they propose is to give them up to the men of your side. They would be the legal surrenderers; your friends of the Border

the legalized captors. I would check both sides of that contest.

If a change of chapter is the course, I know none better or safer than that merely declaratory change, proposed by the East Genesee Conference, reaffirming the doctrine of 1784, that "the practice of slaveholding is contrary to the golden rule"—a very different proposition from that of your note. The inferiority of all these methods to the change of rule is, that they are not fundamental; they have not the solemn sanction of the two-thirds vote, and will not compose the controversy by a satisfactory finality. Take that finality course, Dr. Stevens, and instead of convulsion there will be peace. Such a finality I think there is which our South can safely concede, and our East, West, and Centre will accept. Let us see.

The particular form of General Rule to be adopted is of very little consequence, provided it include the idea, that self-interested slaveholding is sin. Men who wish to obtain credit for supporting the change, and yet defeat its adoption, will be very critical about the form. The above idea is well expressed in the new rule proposed by the Providence Conference, which excludes from the Church "slaveholding, buying, or selling, &c." Yet to this might even be added a discriminating qualification. When we passed our new Temperance Rule, excluding all drinking of ardent spirits, the qualification was added, "except in cases of extreme necessity." This is a precisely analogous case, and the qualification can easily be supplied. It might read thus: "Slaveholding for self-interest," or "slaveholding except solely for benevolent objects," or "slaveholding except for emancipation or other benefit of the slave." All these, with any but a quibbling

criticism, express the idea, and would be accepted by conservative Anti-slavery men. Anti-slavery men of our Border Conferences can grant this, and the great mass of our North would ask no more. The Border, or at least its Anti-slavery portion, cannot refuse it, for it is the very ground maintained by their own great champion, the late Dr. Bond; nor can you reject it with the slightest consistency, for it is less strong than the form for which you voted at the last General Conference. In this form, then, the great mass of both sides ought, and, I think, unless your injudicious course raises the Border demand too high, can agree. If so, the question can be settled, and the peace and repose of the Church secured.

For the newly-invented pretence that the passage of the new rule would be *ex post facto*, there is not a shadow of support. It is not a debatable question. That pretence would destroy our temperance rule, and even destroy all power in the Church of changing or adding a Rule. Everybody knows that this power in the Church, thus to affect our membership, is part of the original agreement. It underlies our membership at entrance, being the express condition upon which we enter. Every one knows this, and you knew it; and the seriousness with which you affect to treat the nonsense as a new, grave question, is ludicrous. Yet even this objection could be evaded by a formula, which, if the objection be valid, must be added to every new rule. Let it be the last in the series of rules, and read thus: "Slaveholding for self-interest; but this specification shall not be so enforced as to affect membership existing, consistently with our Discipline, previous to its enactment."

Equally ludicrous is the pretence that this change

of Rule would be "a gross insult to our slaveholding brethren of the South." For the Church to refuse to condemn sin, because it would insult the sinner, is a soft-cushioned gospel that will not "mention hell to ears polite." We did not refuse to pass our Rule against intemperance for fear of insulting our rum-selling brethren. Gentlemen of tender sensibilities around the throat should never incur the hemp. And sinners of an exquisite delicacy should either acquire a sounder moral character, or a tougher system of nerves.

And why the reaffirming with constitutional solemnity the doctrine of 1784 should be so strenuously, I may say, so fiercely and so threateningly opposed, passes my power of comprehension. Why such pictures of ruin, and such implied menaces to bring that ruin about, if such a thing be done? Surely, Doctor, imagination, or misunderstanding, or partisanship, or love of control, inspires this most rash and thoughtless style of opposition to an inevitable and a benign measure. Let it once be passed—the result will be finality and peace. And when this calm and conciliatory view is taken in discussion, much of its acrimony may be discarded, and conservative men may see that the true conservatism is for the change.

Sooner or later this measure must be accomplished. It is in the book of Providence, and is only a question of time. For the assertion made by Senator Seward in the last Congress, "that the battle of freedom is won," is hourly proving itself true. The majority of Presidential electors of the Free States over the Slave States is already sixty-six. So rapidly are the Free States multiplying, and Slave States becoming Free States, that this controversy will soon, blessed be

God, be slipping from our fingers before we are aware. In ten years, if the friends of Freedom are faithful to her cause, slaveholders will cease to be a mentionable power in the nation, and Slavery will cease to be a question in Church or State, North. The danger of slaveholding supremacy is nearly past; and the asperity of the quarrel, with a more liberal and judicious course on your part, may soon begin to pass with it. Meantime the sense of a need that our Church legislation should advance is fast spreading and deepening toward our Southern border. It will be, and it is, imperatively demanded. The echoing responses to this demand are pealing through every quarter around us. The General Conference is not distant when the change would pass without a dissenting voice. While, therefore, I should think it folly to precipitate the measure at the expense of convulsion, I see no grounds for such convulsion, and no reason for the earnestness of the opposition to it.

And why should even our true Anti-slavery brethren of the Baltimore Conferences object to this change of rule? It can have no other organic force than they please to give it. They are inevitably its final interpreters and executors. And why, as a doctrinal proposition, should they particularly object? Love of dictation must be resigned, and the pride of immutability must soon cease. For Maryland, in the order of a blessed Providence, as all agree, is soon to be a free State, and this rule is only a premonitory announcement of the day-spring of freedom. It is but the programme of her happy future; it but antedates her approaching position. Let but her sons in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church anticipate, in the true spirit of freedom and of Methodism, the day when

the plan which Asbury once inaugurated to advance the cause of emancipation on her soil, may again be reinstated. Could my voice but reach them—a voice which they, perhaps, have most unjustly supposed to be hostile to their interests, or unsympathizing with their difficulties—how would I exhort her ministry, especially her younger ministry, not to shun the cross of freedom and righteousness. Nobly have their fathers, by excluding Slavery from their ranks, maintained the protest of freedom, while others slept through the long night to the present hour. But now, alas, those fathers are desirous to stand in their ancient track. Their pride of old position prevents their stirring forward. The decade of movement has come. Through the ten coming years the triumph of liberty will be consummated, let them not fail to share the honors of the triumph, and be the earliest heralds of its approach. Oh, that they could feel the spirit of the hour and seize the prize that courts their grasp! In whatever form the Church shall shape the signal of freedom, let them accept the omen. Even if it assume the briefly severe form of this change of Rule, let them prudently but bravely stand the crisis, and the Church, without a jar of her peace or unity, will share the contest, and wear the laurel.

D. D. WHEDON.

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